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THANK YOU Senator Myrie for this hearing and your commitment to improving Elections in New York State.

Over the past 4 years I have had the unique experience of being both a voter, poll worker, poll watcher, and candidate. During that time I have been able to see the Board of Elections through different lenses. Today I would like to share with you observations from those different experiences that I believe if addressed would improve elections.

As A Voter

The launch of early voting and the increase in early voting sites has made voting so much easier for my family. In November despite the crush of voters on day 1 of early voting my early voting site handled it beautifully. The only struggle I saw was with some workers not following the mask mandate in the strictest sense. And I think we all hope that a day is coming when we no longer have to mask up.

As A Poll Worker

In November, I was a poll worker for the first time. The training provided by the Board of Elections was great and the materials were very helpful. The day of the General Election - my Supervisor was great at ensuring I was clear on my responsibilities. Yet, it was very overwhelming ensuring that every little task was done correctly on such a high volume day.

During my training, I asked if it were possible for new poll workers to get a shift during early voting for some on the job training. It was explained that Early Voting shifts require additional training and that until you worked 3 election/primary days you aren't eligible for Early Voting shifts. In my opinion this is backwards. New poll workers should be offered at minimum one early voting shift in addition to the mandated Election Day shift. This provides a new poll worker the opportunity to get acclimated to all the responsibilities and tasks prior to the marathon that is Election Day.

As Candidate

In 2018 I and several others in Queens decided to run for County Committee, a volunteer uncompensated position. As activists do, we worked together - crowdsourcing expertise and trying to garner all pertinent rules and regulations in order to get on the ballot. Yet many of us encountered obstacles and issues when filing our petitions. And in the spirit of impartiality, all

the Board of Elections employees could do was indicate that there was an issue and handed us their red handbook. Some candidates after filing their petitions were thrown off the ballot because they paperclipped their volume of petitions. All the signatures were valid - yet the petitions were still tossed over a paperclip. This wasn't unique that year - 60 people were turned down due to a paperwork technicality.

However, those same lawyers that objected to the paper clip were the lawyer of record for the Queens Democratic Party that ran Arlene Dudkin-Sachs, a woman that had moved to Florida two and a half years prior. She remained on the ballot despite the fact that she didn't satisfy the residency requirement. She and 21 other candidates that year were all candidates for county committee and were completely unaware that they were being run for those positions.

Running for public or party office should not be so challenging nor should the process be so enigmatic. First, we need to demystify running for office. Just as the Campaign Finance Board offers training to help campaigns comply with the rules, financial disclosures, and navigate the post-election audit process - The Board of Elections should do the same with petitioning and other subsequent election regulations - the do's and don'ts of petitioning, filing those petitions and what to expect next.

Second, we need to stop this practice of adding people to giant petitions without their knowledge or consent. We must address this with a change to election law. And I know that in order to do this requires a sort of political will that is formidable and fearless. The following suggested changes were drafted by a fellow County Committee Member Peter Beadle....

Section 6-120 Designation and nomination; restrictions

1. A petition, except as otherwise herein provided, for the purpose of designating any person as a candidate for party nomination at a primary election **shall be valid only if the person so designated is an enrolled member of the party referred to in said designating petition at the time of the filing of the petition. Further, in the event that a candidate does not witness their own petition, then written consent of the candidate to allow their name to be listed on the designating petition, must be provided to the petitioner.**

2. Except as provided in subdivisions three and four of this section, no party designation or nomination shall be valid unless the person so designated or nominated shall be an enrolled member of the political party referred to in the certificate of designation or nomination at the time of filing of such certificate. **Further, in the event that a candidate does not witness their own petition, then written consent of the candidate to allow their name to be listed on the designating petition, must be provided to the petitioner.**

As A Poll Watcher

During Early Voting this year in City Council District 29 we had a few challenges at our early voting site at the Rego Center Community Center. The first was the lack of diligence regarding electioneering. Candidates were handing out tote bags etc prior to voters entering the site. They were allowed to bring in these items without issue. Then I witnessed a poll worker with a candidates bag attached to her walker as she entered the site from lunch. As candidates move from flyer distribution to merch - site managers need to be even more diligent.

The second challenge was the lack of Russian translators at that voting site. Many voters came to the site with a "family member" to help them fill out their ballot. One of the candidates was alleging that they weren't family members, but were sent with them to tell them exactly who to vote for. After repeated incidents that candidate sent a poll watcher that was fluent in Russian to ensure the practice was halted. Yet, when Saturday came his translator who was observant wasn't able to be at the site. This could all be resolved if we ensured that we had the right translators at each voting site.

Lastly, I have been a poll watcher during the absentee ballot canvas in 2020 and 2021. The Queens Board of Elections got some really bad press after the error in June. But, I am here to say that I have found the staff at the Queens Board of Election have been great to work with. They make the rules clear, enforce them politely, handle difficult personalities with dignity, and they answered every question we raised to them.

Thank you for your dedication to improving how we elect our leaders.